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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HALIFAX 0027

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

DEPT FOR WHA/CAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PBTS](#) [ETRD](#) [EFIS](#) [EAGR](#) [CA](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: ATLANTIC CANADA WORRIED BY IMPACT OF BORDER
SCREENING REGULATIONS ON U.S.-BOUND EXPORTS

REF: A. STATE 036401, B. 02 Halifax 0091

1. SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Nova Scotia officials have raised with CG the deep concerns in Atlantic Canada over the potential that USG border screening systems, including the regulations emanating from the Bioterrorism Act, will hurt the large volume of agricultural and fish exports from this region to the United States. END SUMMARY

3. (SBU) Nova Scotia's Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Gordon Balser, accompanied by a group of economic officials from various departments of the provincial government, requested a meeting with CG on February 7 to express concerns about the potential impact of the USG's new bio-terrorism preparedness measures on Atlantic Canada's exports to the United States.

4. (SBU) Both the governments and private companies in this part of the country have heard fairly dire warnings from industry groups about what they fear will be cumbersome new requirements that will result from the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002. For example, the Fisheries Council of Canada held a seminar last month in Halifax spelling out new requirements for shippers to register with the FDA, to provide exhaustive "traceability" records for exported goods, and to provide eight hours advance notice whenever a truckload of agricultural or fish products is about to approach the U.S. border.

5. (SBU) Balser explained that, based on what they have heard from the Fisheries Council and other groups, Nova Scotia exporters are concerned about the potential for these new paperwork requirements to cause long delays at the land border crossings. These delays, he postulated, might be compounded once the USG finishes putting in place new secure ID and biometric systems for screening people entering the United States. The Minister noted that USG border programs such as FAST, NEXUS, and C-TPAT are not as well understood in Atlantic Canada as they are in other parts of the country because they have not been employed as much here until now. He begged for the USG to consider setting up pilot projects for Atlantic exporters that would enable companies that ship goods frequently to get their drivers properly credentialed early.

6. (SBU) Nova Scotia officials are particularly concerned about fish and agricultural products, which constitute the majority of Atlantic exports to the United States and are the lifeblood of many small communities. Minister Balser, who happens to be the legislative representative of one such community, worries that delays would be devastating for perishable food products such as live lobsters and fish with a short shelf life.

7. (SBU) The Minister made no secret of his distrust of Ottawa on these issues. He observed that the Canadian federal government does not appreciate the impact of new border measures on Atlantic Canada and has little willingness to help the region participate in these pilot programs. He told CG that this was yet another case of Ottawa politicians' "dismissive attitude" toward protecting the interests of the economically depressed Atlantic region. With that, Balser said his province must look at mounting its own campaign to see the region get fast-track participation in any new USG border programs.

8. (SBU) CG provided Minister Balser and the other officials with the information concerning the Bioterrorism Act contained in ref A, and promised to deliver a more extensive briefing on FAST/NEXUS/C-TPAT in the near future.

9. (SBU) COMMENT: Atlantic officials perennially complain about neglect from Ottawa, but in this case they perceive strongly that other regions of Canada have benefited from preferential treatment in terms of advance participation in new USG border screening programs. New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord has sought to bring pilot projects to land border crossings in his province (ref B), but has not up to his point received much support from regional counterparts. Balser's comments suggest that a regional push from officials of all four provinces might be forthcoming.

KASHKETT